

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 3909

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINF, IS, EG

SUBJ: VOI POSITION ON CURRENT NEGOTIATIONS

REF: TEL AVIV 3906

FOR ASST. SEC'Y ATHERTON FROM CHARGE

1. WE HAVE TRANSMITTED BY SEPTTEL LENGHTY ARTICLE BY MAARIV COMMENTATOR HARIF WHICH DESCRIBES JUNE 17 CABINET MEETING IN GREAT DETAIL, DELVING INTO VIEWS OF PRIME MINISTER RABIN AS WELL AS ATTITUDES OF OTHER CABINET MINISTERS TOWARD ISSUES CONNECTED WITH NEGOTIATIONS FOR AN INTERIM EGYPTIAN/ISRAELI AGREEMENT. HARIF ALSO PROVIDES FASCINATING ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT INTERPLAY OF FORCES ON DOMESTIC POLITICAL SCENE, INCLUDING IMPACT OF VIEWS OF DAYAN AND LIKUD OPPOSITION ON RABIN'S NEGOTIATING STANCE. WHILE WE CANNOT STATE WITH CERTAINTY THAT ALL OF HARIF'S FACTS ARE ACCURATE, ARTICLE HAS RING OF AUTHENTICITY AND I COMMEND IT TO YOU IN ITS ENTIRETY. (WE HAVE HAD SOME SIMILAR INFO FROM OTHER SOURCES, INCLUDING MY CONVERSATION WITH YAACOBI (SEPTTEL) AND MEMBER OF KNESSET FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND SECURITY COMMITTEE.)

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2. MAIN THEME OF ARTICLE IS THAT RABIN (WHO HARIF BELIEVES

IS UNDOUBTEDLY KEY PERSON IN CABINET ON THIS MATTER) IS FIRMLY COMMITTED TO MAINTAINING "HARD POSITION" ON ISRAELI REQUIREMENTS FOR INTERIM AGREEMENT. IN PARTICULAR, RABIN IS DETERMINED NOT TO CEDE EASTERN END OF PASSES IN ABSENCE OF CLEARCUT EGYPTIAN COMMITMENT TO END STATE OF WAR. AT SAME TIME, RABIN REPORTEDLY IS CONVINCED THAT GESTURE OF OFFERING NEW ISRAELI CONCESSION ON ABU RODEIS DURING WASHINGTON VISIT WAS SHREWD TACTICAL MOVE, MAKING IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR USG TO ACCUSE ISRAEL OF INTRANSIGENCE WHILE PUTTING BALL BACK IN SADAT'S COURT TO COME UP WITH APPROPRIATE COUNTER-CONCESSION.

3. HARIF DESCRIBES VARIETY OF FACTORS INFLUENCING FORMULATION OF RABIN'S HARD POSITION: A) HE BELIEVES IN INTRINSIC LEGITIMACY OF ISRAELI POSITION TO RETAIN EASTERN END OF PASSES AS LONG AS THERE IS UNCERTAINTY RE EGYPTIAN INTENTIONS; B) THE PRINCIPLE OF MUTUALITY HAS ITS OWN INHERENT VALUE AND MUST BE HONORED.; C) EGYPT AND US WANT AGREEMENT AS BADLY AS ISRAEL, AND THEREFORE ISRAEL IS IN EXCELLENT BARGAINING POSITION; D) ISRAEL IS ALSO IN SUFFICIENTLY STRONG ECONOMIC/MILITARY SITUATION, ON BASIS OF US AID/ARMS SUPPLY, TO BE ABLE TO AFFORD TAKING TOUGH LINE; AND E) RABIN BELIEVES THAT HE CANNOT REVERSE POSITION HE TOOK IN MARCH ON PASSES WITHOUT DESTROYING HIS CREDIBILITY ON HOMEFRONT.

5. HARIF ALSO HIGHLIGHTS SHARP CONTRAST OF VIEWS WITHIN ISRAELI CABINET. ON ONE HAND, PERES, YAACOB, GALILI AND HILLEL SUPPORT RABIN'S HARD POSITION (HILLEL REPORTEDLY BELIEVES THAT, WITHIN FRAMEWORK OF LIMITED AGREEMENT, THERE IS NO NEED FOR ISRAEL TO GIVE UP ANY PART OF PASSES). PERES IN CABINET DISCUSSION REPORTEDLY KEPT TO GENERALIZATIONS, EMPHASIZING IMPORTANCE OF OBTAINING CLARIFICATIONS FROM US AS TO WHAT LIES AHEAD BEYOND INTERIM AGREEMENT; IN PRIVATE, HOWEVER, PERES ALSO HAS REPORTEDLY INDICATED THAT ISRAEL CANNOT RELINQUISH ENTIRE PASSES. ON OTHER SIDE OF SPECTRUM, "QUITE A FEW" MINISTERS BELIEVE THAT, IN ORDER TO AVOID CONFRONTATION WITH US, ISRAEL WILL

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EVENTUALLY HAVE TO GIVE UP ENTIRE PASSES. HARIF SPECIFICALLY INCLUDES ALLON IN THIS GROUP. (NOTE: WE CANNOT EVALUATE ACCURACY OF THIS ASSESSMENT OF ALLON'S PERSONAL POSITION. BASED ON MY RECENT CONVERSATIONS WITH EVRON, SEEMS CLEAR SENIOR LEVELS OF MFA ARE LEANING TOWARD HARDER LINE ON PASSES.) THOSE MINISTERS WHO ARE NOT MEMBERS OF NEGOTIATING TEAM HAVE STIPULATED THAT ANY NEGATIVE DECISION ON NEGOTIATIONS MUST BE DECIDED BY ENTIRE CABINET, ALTHOUGH

NEGOTIATING TRIO HAS GREEN LIGHT TO MOVE FORWARD ON AGREEMENT.

6. DOMESTIC POLITICS ALSO ARE INVOLVED IN FORMULATION OF RABIN'S STANCE. IN PARTICULAR MOSHE DAYAN'S POSITION, THAT IF GOI SHOULD DECIDE TO GIVE UP ENTIRE PASSES WITHOUT GOE NON-BELLIGERENCY COMMITMENT HE WOULD VOTE AGAINST AGREEMENT IN KNESSET, HAS CONSTRAINING EFFECT. IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES, HARIF NOTES, LIKUD AS WELL AS "MEMBERS OF OTHER FACTIONS" PROBABLY WOULD JOIN DAYAN IN OPPOSING AGREEMENT (ALTHOUGH POSITION OF LIBERAL PARTY WITHIN LIKUD IS OPEN QUESTION).

7. HARIF ALSO CITES RABIN'S GLOOMY ASSESSMENT THAT, ON BASIS OF CLARIFICATIONS FROM HIS WASHINGTON TRIP, CHANCES FOR INTERIM AGREEMENT ARE "LESS THAN FIFTY-FIFTY". (NOTE: EDITOR PRESENT AT RABIN'S BRIEFING OF SENIOR PRESS REPS TELLS US RABIN USED FIGURES "30-70".) AS MUCH AS RABIN (AND REST OF CABINET) SINCERELY WANT INTERIM AGREEMENT, HE IS PREPARED TO COUNTENANCE RENEWED BREAKDOWN OF NEGOTIATIONS IF ISRAEL'S LATEST POSITION - WHICH HE BELIEVES IS VERY GENEROUS - IS REJECTED BY EGYPT. IN SUM, HARIF CONCLUDES, AS FAR AS RABIN IS CONCERNED, IT IS NOW UP TO SADAT TO DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT THERE WILL BE INTERIM AGREEMENT. VELIOTES

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